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ABSTRACT

This booklet contains a series of potential educational goals for Michigan in 1985, prepared by a task force appointed by the governor. The selection of these goals was guided by three major considerations: programs likely to achieve progress within a year, projects directly affecting the classroom level, and goals with statewide effects. These goals address the following areas: (1) early childhood education, (2) expanded student testing and assessment, (3) high technology in education, (4) Michigan accreditation standards, (5) Michigan Certification Code changes, (6) Michigan Merit Scholarship program, (7) Michigan schools communication plan, (8) professional development, (9) school and business partnerships, (10) school district/university teacher exchanges, (11) school improvement process, (12) school attendance and discipline, (13) student career plan, (14) student transportation funding improvements, and (15) university/school district improvement program. (TE)

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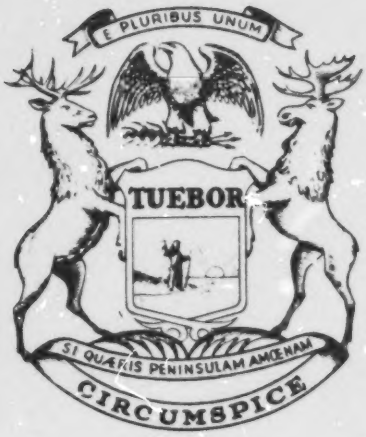

Governor's Educational Summit Task Force

REPORT

EA 017 601

Message from the Governor

On behalf of the citizens of Michigan, I want to thank Don Bemis and the other members of the Educational Summit Task Force for a truly remarkable job. I am fully aware of the hours and days you spent in traveling to all parts of the state to seek the views of our citizens on this vital topic.

I know that each one of you has an important role in our community and that this commitment represents a considerable sacrifice. You have earned the lasting gratitude of all the people of our state, and especially of the countless students who will benefit from your efforts.

As I told you in my original charge to the Task Force, education in Michigan is finally back where it belongs: at the top of our list of state priorities. To deal effectively with the pressures of change throughout society we must adjust our educational institutions to meet new challenges. Quality education is a vital ally in the fight for our state's total economic recovery.

Finally, I want to thank the thousands of citizens who participated in the pre-summit meetings. In every community, they turned out in unprecedented numbers to work to improve our educational system. In a very real sense, they played a leadership role in a democratic process to plan the programs which will be implemented in the months and years ahead.

To the members of the Task Force and to those pioneering citizen-planners I pledge a thorough review of the measures recommended and a solid effort to implement them as available resources allow. I know that the members of the Legislature, of both parties, and members of the State Board of Education will join with me in seeking to achieve that goal.

James J. Blanchard, Governor

Statement from the Task Force

This booklet contains a series of potential educational goals for Michigan in 1985. The goals were prepared by a Task Force, appointed by Governor James J. Blanchard, which traveled from the iron ore docks of Marquette to a Detroit university to seek the input of Michigan's leaders in this important mission.

Once the proposed goals were drafted by the Task Force, more than 3,100 Michigan leaders attended five public summit meetings to react to them. The summits were held in Marquette, Traverse City, Saginaw, Comstock and Detroit.

Better than two thirds of the leaders attending the summits responded to the goals with written comments, position papers, verbal suggestions and through a survey questionnaire. In spite of the high response to our request for critical evaluations of the potential goals, the Task Force feels that consideration should be given to additional feedback processes in the future.

Three major considerations guided our final selection of the 1985 goals which are presented in this booklet. First, we picked programs which would be likely to achieve progress within a year. We also tried to pick projects which would have a direct impact at the classroom level. Finally, we tried to pick goals which would have an impact statewide.

National and state studies on a variety of educational subjects were reviewed by the Task Force as they considered the 1985 goals. The sources included information received at a Michigan hearing on improving public education that was hosted by House Speaker Gary M. Owen last spring and the Michigan Blueprint For Action adopted by the Michigan Board of Education in January. The staff of State Superintendent Dr. Phillip Runkel also provided research and historical information throughout the Task Force project.

However, the goals in this booklet represent only the final judgments of the Task Force members. They do not necessarily reflect the position of the Governor's office. The Task Force did not address the issue of funding these projects. We also expect that appropriate consideration for special education and vocational education students will be given in all final documents and legislation.

The willingness of Governor Blanchard to involve Michigan's leaders in a partnership for educational excellence in Michigan also expresses the spirit of many of the goals themselves.

One of the underlying themes of the recommendations is that all parties to be affected by recommended changes play a role in planning for those changes.

The Task Force also has tried to provide greater opportunities for parent and public input into Michigan's education process in the future.

A number of the goals also involve the creation of statewide standards to provide information and inspiration to local districts. It is recommended

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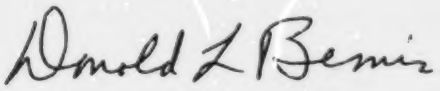
that financial and human resources incentives be included to help districts meet the standards when possible. However, the Task Force believes that local districts should not be required to adopt the standards.

It is also the Task Force's opinion that the goals should be instituted carefully using model study programs whenever possible. A competitive process of judging the model programs is encouraged.

The Task Force wishes to thank Governor Blanchard and the people of Michigan for the opportunity to serve the important mission of educational excellence in our state. With the continued support and involvement of Michigan leaders and legislators in this dynamic process, we are confident that significant educational improvement will take place in the coming months.



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Early childhood education

With state planning, support and financial incentives, all four-years-olds from all walks of life in Michigan would get a positive orientation to the social and academic challenges they will soon face.

More than a third of Michigan's school districts are giving their children a proven boost to adult success by enrolling them in early childhood education programs. Another 40 districts are ready to begin similar programs if the space and funding were available.

The long-term benefits and cost effectiveness of early childhood education are conclusively positive, particularly for children from poor and minority group populations. And in districts which have promoted such programs, the support is overwhelming. As many as 75 percent of all four-year-olds in some districts are enrolled in programs ranging from traditional "pre-school" to cooperative associations of teachers and parents.

Sound early childhood programs, meeting State Board of Education standards, can also help the state's 50 percent working mothers of children under six years of age, particularly the 20 percent who are single parents.

Early childhood classes could be organized to give four-year-olds a chance to explore a wide variety of activities for up to 20 weeks per school year.

State financial support for the program is recommended. This investment will assure that many more youngsters become involved in programs which have already proven their value in increased adult wages, productivity and civic responsibility.

To accomplish this goal, it is recommended that a Commission on Early Childhood Education consisting of both public and private representatives be established to create an Early Childhood Education Program under the direction of the Michigan Board of Education for the public schools during the 1984-85 school year. The Commission should address the following issues, as well as others it may deem important:

- Adequate funding for school districts within current state aid guidelines;
- Guidelines for the voluntary inclusion of private programs where public school programs are not available;
- Model curricula for early childhood programs;
- Qualifications required for teachers in the programs (both training and experience should be considered as factors in the initial stages of the program);
- Seek additional input from early childhood professionals in universities, intermediate school districts and the Michigan Department of Education;
- Name model sites that already employ effective early childhood programs and use them for in-service training of other personnel.

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Expanded student testing and assessment

Michigan's testing information can become a greater force in local school district planning and improvement with a few significant changes in the current statewide program.

Taxpayers and parents need to understand that there is a system for evaluating student achievement and school improvement in place. They should also be given information about the workings of the school system and how the test information will be used to improve learning opportunities for students.

The Michigan Board of Education should be directed to develop materials and processes which communicate the testing process and the uses of testing information, prepare students for testing, report testing results to the public and dovetail testing with curriculum planning.

Students must be prepared for testing. In many cases, poor performance on statewide tests (MEAP) is due to inadequate student preparation. Teaching students how to take standardized tests ensures more realistic results.

Test results should be readily available to the community. The public should be told how the students did — what were the strengths, the weaknesses and what schools and parents can do to improve future scores.

In addition, to encourage greater emphasis on using testing results, it is recommended that all students be tested in a wider range of basic skills such as science, social studies, writing, career development, health and physical development. This will enable school districts to increase the use of test results.

Students who have already mastered their basic skills should be tested on their overall level of skills. This will ensure that better students are performing up to their educational potential.

Finally, testing should not be limited to grades four, seven and 10. Alternate grades could be used for some of the new subjects which are being tested.

Taken together, the above recommendations will strengthen testing performance and increase the usefulness of test results. School districts adopting such a comprehensive plan will find testing information to be a springboard for curriculum planning and a powerful communication connection to the public.

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High technology in education

Planning disparities in the applications of new knowledge among Michigan's school districts must be narrowed through better high-technology planning.

Macomb, Oakland and Wayne County schools, for example, have more than 10,000 microcomputers. Yet many of those and others statewide were purchased on the basis of parent pressure or low price. All teachers have not been trained to use them and the instructional software accompanying them is often outmoded.

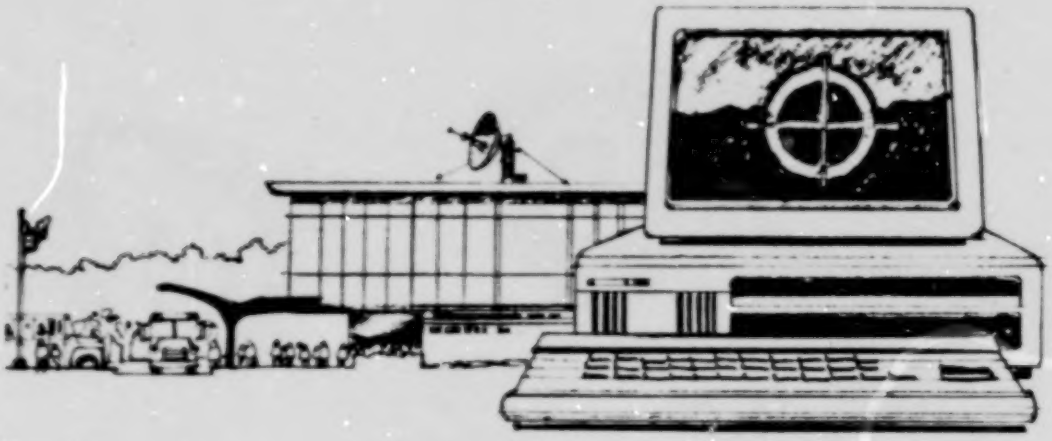
The following are among the range of new technology which are finding useful applications in our communities. They must be considered for integration into our school districts and classrooms:

- Computer technology (micro, mini and mainframe computers, computer networking and information storage technologies);
- Television technology (cable television, microwave relay, broadcast television/technologies, database access systems, and digital telephone networks);
- Interactive technologies (teleconferencing, electronic mail/messaging, video discs);
- Instructional and administrative software (compatibility and standards, evaluation and selection, availability/accessibility, development and use).

To take full advantage of the existing and emerging educational media and technologies which can help students prepare for our complex adult world, the Michigan Board of Education should establish an Office of Educational Technology.

This office would:

- Review educational high technology systems which have been developed for states such as Minnesota and Montana.
- Develop a statewide plan for the effective use of new educational



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media and technology in Michigan. The plan would build on the current resources of regional support units in intermediate school districts and/or regional educational media centers. The plan should include provisions for technical training and collective bargaining implications, etc.;

- Fund a developmental center to evaluate existing software which has potential application in Michigan's schools;
- Develop a statewide model which assures that teachers and administrators have access to training at least at the intermediate level or at regional sites within some intermediate school district service area; and,
- Coordinate a competitive bidding process to help Michigan school districts obtain hardware and software at the best possible prices.

As these elements are completed, the statewide plan for technology should be designed by the Office of Instructional Technology and implemented at the intermediate school district and/or regional training sites.

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Michigan accreditation standards

It is time for Michigan to join with the half of this nation's states which have elementary and secondary accreditation based upon established standards.

The state legislature should take a major step toward letting everyone know just what standards our schools are meeting — or are working to meet — by approving the concept of voluntary kindergarten to twelfth grade accreditation.

Using the best criteria of other accreditation systems and adding a statewide fine-tuning mechanism, a degree from any accredited Michigan high school would signify that the graduate has achieved a high educational standard.

Michigan's accreditation system would include basic standards, such as ratio of certified staff members to pupils and number of library books per student. Another potential feature would be the application of performance-based criteria to judge the success of a school district by the success of its students.

Teachers and other employees would be involved in the study. But the system would do more than evaluate schools; it would offer resources to help local districts overcome their areas of failure. The resources could be financial, material or consultative in nature. Depending upon the need, resources would come from the state, intermediate district or even an area university.

Today, about 41 percent of Michigan's 850 secondary schools are accredited under the North Central Association's voluntary program. Many more of these schools have received University of Michigan accreditation. However, extremely few elementary schools — the buildings where most students spend more than half their 13 years of education — are being measured against an objective accreditation standard.

Statewide accreditation can assure that Michigan's students have the building and material resources, and are receiving the academic and technical programs they need, to succeed in our ever-changing adult environment. Accreditation can also help the public know whether their local school district is offering programs which will enhance the graduate's opportunities throughout the state.

The exact accreditation program must still be planned beginning at the faculty level and pre-tested in a statewide approach involving all levels of education.

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Michigan Certification Code changes

Michigan citizens should be assured that the teachers of children in their communities have a fundamental understanding of the subject matter they teach. In addition to understanding their subject matter, teachers should be familiar with the instructional techniques which best fit the developmental level of their students.

Further, administrators responsible for instructional programs should also be able to demonstrate their qualifications for their leadership tasks.

These are among the significant recommendations designed to better prepare adequate teacher preparation in their areas of instruction and quality leadership among school administrators.

This effort parallels a national reexamination of rules and procedures for preparing and certifying teachers, and for preparing administrators for changing roles. There is a growing interest in this subject by the public, the media, the educational establishment and the state legislature (about a dozen bills on this subject have recently been introduced).

The Michigan Certification Code Commission of the State Board of Education has already devoted a great deal of study to this issue. Support for the following recommended changes in certification standards would enhance local school district efforts to improve the quality of the instruction in their communities.

- All teachers would have adequate academic preparation relating to the particular level of their assignment, i.e., elementary, middle school, junior high, senior high; whether their assignment self-conatined or departmentalized.
- All teacher preparation programs should include information which helps future instructors focus on the educational and social development of the students they will eventually teach.
- The State Board of Education, in cooperation with the State Legislature, should prepare professional development opportunities for classroom teachers in the subject areas to which they are assigned.
- The State Superintendent should develop a certification plan for all administrators having direct or indirect responsibility for instruction.
- A process should be instituted to systematically and periodically review teacher preparation institutions.
- The state legislature should provide the financial support needed to make the above standards a reality in Michigan schools by the 1985-86 school year.

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Michigan Merit Scholarship program

Michigan's most academically capable high school graduates would be guaranteed a $500 annual scholarship for their higher education plans under a Michigan Merit Scholarship Program provided by the state.

The program would select and publicly commend students from every state high school for their outstanding academic records each year. This visable commendation would provide an incentive for all students to do well.

Families of moderate financial means, which are encountering difficulty in meeting college expenses even though the student may have achieved an outstanding academic record, would benefit most from this program. Given the rapid increases in the costs of tuition, fees, room and board and other higher educational expenses in Michigan in recent years, many families are likely to need the financial relief this proposal provides. The plan also addresses recent recommendations from various educational task forces which have called for greater emphasis and incentives for academic excellence.

By earmarking financial awards for students in each high school based upon the size of the graduating class, this program would guarantee recognition for academic excellence statewide. For example, a small school with fewer than 100 graduates might be guaranteed two Merit Awards, while a large school with more than 400 graduates would be guaranteed 10 Merit Awards.

The actual Michigan Merit Award presentation could be made at a public ceremony and announced to media through a news release similar to that now used by the National Merit Scholarship Program. This publicity and recognition of outstanding academic achievement would encourage similar achievement by students in lower grades.

The existing State Competitive Scholarship Program, which is available to virtually all college-bound seniors, would be used as the basis for selecting grant recipients.

It would not be necessary to provide the grant to students whose total higher education expenses are covered by other scholarship sources. The grants would also be available only to persons planning to attend Michigan institutions of higher learning.

It is believed that the state's contribution would be limited by persons who are ineligible because of other grants and matriculation at out-of-state colleges and universities.

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Michigan schools communication plan

The school-home-community partnership, a recognized formula for successful learning, can be strengthened considerably through a consumer-oriented approach to communication. Michigan schools need to build better partnerships with their communities by adopting communication programs which find out what their "customers" want and check on the consumer's level of satisfaction.

Research shows clearly that people are willing to get more involved in schools, and will support their programs, if they believe their efforts will bring results. Citizen committees of 500 and above and survey return rates of 90 percent and more have been achieved in some Michigan school districts where professional marketing strategies are applied.

To strengthen the school-home-community partnership and make Michigan's schools even better, it is recommended that, with guidance from the State Board of Education:

- Michigan school districts develop a written five-year educational plan which is updated annually;
- The plan be developed using direct and/or indirect citizen involvement techniques such as citizens advisory committees or scientifically conducted surveys.
- School district residents receive a year-end report which explains progress made during the year and the district goals for the next school year.

To create better public understanding of and support for school programs, school districts should also institute the following minimal communication activities:

- Provide an opportunity for public participation and comment on every school board meeting agenda;
- Conduct communication training for administrators, teachers and support staff so all educators can interact more effectively with the public;
- Offer parent-teacher conferences in grades kindergarten through grade 12 during daytime and early evening hours;
- Publish building-level newsletters regularly which contain information about school programs and curriculum;
- Report student progress by sending report cards at least quarterly, and notices to parents in between if a student's progress in a subject changes negatively or positively by more than one grade.

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Professional development

Taking their cue from successful corporations, Michigan schools should be required to have a professional development plan which enables K-12 teachers and principals to upgrade their knowledge and skills, and enhances their ability to improve the quality of each student's learning experience.

Measurable gains in achievement among Michigan students in recent years have substantiated the fact that educational quality is improving. Much of the credit must go to relatively new professional development legislation. However, this training has often been limited to teachers. It has become clear that the total instructional team -- classroom teachers and building principals — need professional development to meet the growing demands of the information explosion, new educational programs, and rising public expectations for schools.

Developing a plan to meet these new challenges and strengthen existing programs is dependent upon expanded training, teamwork and institutional cooperation among all levels of the educational system. The legislative support for professional development which began in 1979 has proved successful and should be used as the base for future improvements.

Another critical element in the improvement of professional development is the continued local governance of Professional Development Policy Boards which were created in the 1979 legislation (Act 79). These Boards can best respond to local needs by weighing local resources and circumstances.

Several professional development action plans are proposed for 1985:

- Professional development funding should be increased and made available to all certified staff members — teachers and administrators alike — in all Michigan schools. For instructional effectiveness and curriculum reform at the building level, such funds should continue to be governed and managed by local policy boards. The additional funds should be used to promote regional or statewide educational objectives such as the use of microcomputers, improvements in math and science instruction, etc.
- Ten pilot projects should be conducted to examine the value of extending the school year for instructional staff by 10 days for

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preparations, plans coordination and joint efforts that focus on improving the quality of the classroom learning experience for all students. The participating districts should be selected on the basis of enrollment, size and geographic location. Detailed records of the success of the program should be kept. The results of the first year should be reported at a summer meeting of schools examining the extended school year for instructional staff.

- Consortium professional development efforts should be sponsored between buildings, districts, intermediate school districts and higher educational institutions. The emphasis for additional funds per staff member involved in the projects should be placed on regional or statewide priorities for curriculum improvements in selected areas such as microcomputers in education, math and science.
- Priorities should be established that give local policy boards, consortiums and partnerships access to college and university research and resources. Annual program planning by higher education should include professional development goals, programs and needs of Michigan's K-12 school districts as a top priority. Such priorities should be coordinated with statewide or regionally recognized educational objectives.
- A study of current uses and experiences, as well as future needs, of local professional development policy boards should be coordinated. Those which have had relationships with intermediate school districts and institutions of higher education must be reviewed. It should be determined whether institutional cooperation can benefit students throughout the state.
- A summer Professional Development Institute should be organized for local professional development policy boards that focuses on the programs and management practices of well-recognized, successful policy boards.
- The State Board of Education should organize model professional development policies and programs. The goal should be to improve student academic achievements through increased allocated time in a school, increased time in classrooms, and increased work on classroom tasks. It is expected that increased daily attendance will also have a positive effect on school dropout rates. Locally developed policies and programs using recognized standards of testing and evaluation are encouraged for the programs. Intermediate and state resources should be made available to assist in the execution of the projects if requested.

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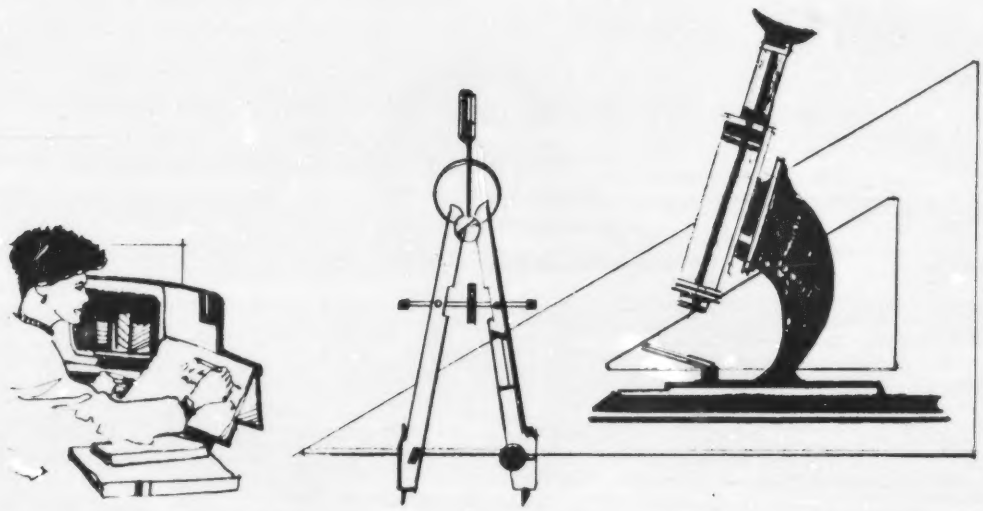
School and business partnerships

Schools, businesses and industries in Michigan have a mutual desire for a well-educated and technically-trained work force. The state could help these institutions work in closer harmony to achieve this desire by promoting partnerships between both parties.

Some partnerships would be philosophical in nature. Industries and local districts may meet to discuss the skills, trends and training that graduates will need in the work places of the area for both traditional and emerging jobs. Other partnerships may involve an actual support of career or vocational school programs through donations of materials and personnel resources. Still other districts would benefit from partnerships which provide field trips, speakers, internships, seminars on business, labor and industrial management processes, career information and cooperative education programs.

The National Commission on Excellence, the Business Higher Education Forum, the 1984 Gallup Survey of the Public's Attitudes Toward Education, and a recent Michigan Career Development Assessment all emphasized the need for better equipped graduates in the private sector.

An obvious starting point for a relationship is identifying what business and industry need from schools and what schools need from business and industry. State Board of Education leadership and intermediate school district coordination would ease the burden of research and planning that many districts face in getting such programs under way. These institutions could help local districts and industries make the determination of need by sponsoring regional symposiums which promote dialogue between the



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parties. State-prepared research on future job needs could help trigger the discussions.

Once needs are identified, the state could provide a series of model partnership programs. Recognizing that successful business/education partnerships in rural and urban settings may require different structures, contingencies for the differences would be built into all state plans and models. Information gathered at symposiums would also be shared with nearby regions or statewide, as is done with communication programs of the Michigan Department of Education through its Project Outreach newsletter.

"Model" programs, which would be reviewed by the state and considered for Michigan use, include the following:

- "Adopt a school" or school district programs;
- Support for specific vocational training courses or schools;
- Career information speakers bureaus;
- Guidelines for business and industry assistance through school and/or school district advisory committees; and
- Help for districts to create Student Career Plans (SCP)

Intermediate school districts could use a business/education model developed in the Flint areas to form councils and develop plans between educational groups and business representatives.

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School district/university teacher exchanges

Exchanges between teachers at Michigan's public school districts and universities offer a no-cost opportunity to enhance the quality of education.

University personnel, who frequently emphasize research and self-examination, will gain from hands-on experiences in school district classrooms, while school district students will benefit from the insights brought to their classrooms by the college and university faculty.

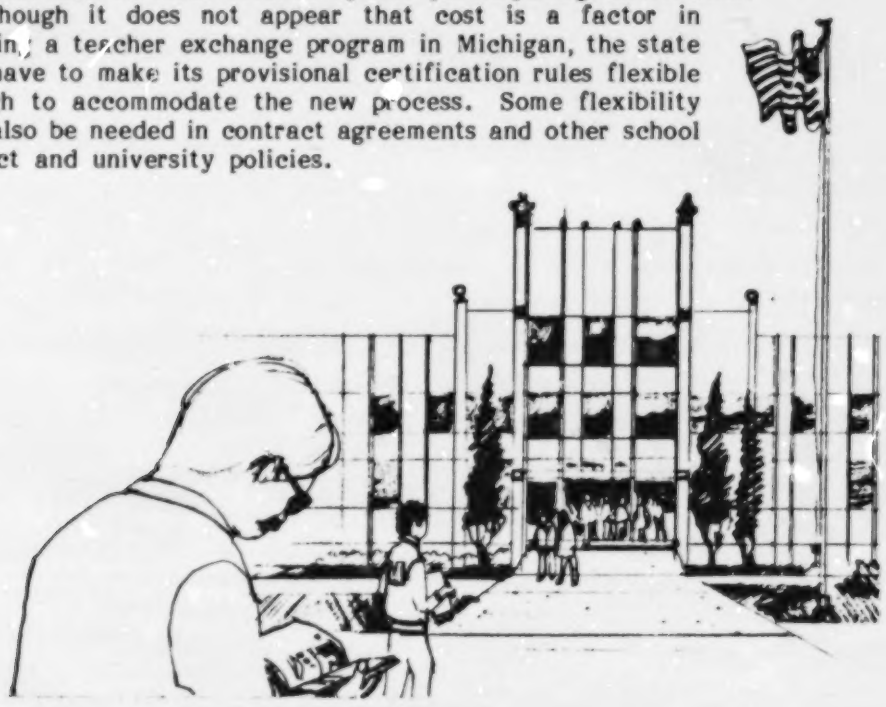
Conversely, the teaching ability of teachers from the school districts can be extended by actual contact with typical high school graduates in a higher education setting. Teachers from the school districts also can give college and university faculty members a great deal of realistic information to consider in their own professional development and renewal.

Research clearly indicates that Michigan education would be well served by such exchanges. When an individual experiences all aspects of any process, he or she is better prepared to deal with all components of the process.

Following successful exchanges between school districts and universities, the program could be expanded to include intermediate school districts and the Michigan Board of Education. The integration of personnel would likely be helpful in making and monitoring the changes which are now being considered for Michigan education.

An exchange program should become part of the improvement processes for school districts and universities. Information and ideas from exchange teachers should be formally reviewed with the objective of enhancing the programs and services offered by the participating institutions.

Although it does not appear that cost is a factor in creating a teacher exchange program in Michigan, the state may have to make its provisional certification rules flexible enough to accommodate the new process. Some flexibility may also be needed in contract agreements and other school district and university policies.



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School improvement process

A "how to" process should be available to intermediate and local school districts to help them identify, plan for, implement and evaluate their program improvements.

Studies have clearly shown that schools and teachers can improve, and students can learn more. Many routes to improvement have also been documented. They include increases in instructional time, homework, graduation requirements, and more. However, one thing which, too often, keeps these and other needed improvements from occurring is lack of a successful "how to" process for planning and acting on these issues.

An effective School Improvement Plan can be made available for every educational project in Michigan. This plan will incorporate the findings of extensive research on successful educational change. The factors include:

- Centering the change around individual school buildings;
- Treating change as a process, not a short event;
- Continuous involvement by the affected staff in noting and sustaining change; and,
- The availability of other resources for organizational or instructional processes.

In order to address all aspects related to educational change, the following other elements must also be addressed:

- Building needs must be analyzed and prioritized; an action plan which includes development, execution and evaluation must be prepared; the outcomes must be reported to the total educational community;
- Persons affected by decisions must be involved in making them — sharing personal ownership, understanding and commitment for those involved;
- Leadership development must be prepared; and,
- Although outside help may be necessary, direction for change must come from local sources.

All of these factors are taken into account in the School Improvement Plan included in the Michigan Board of Education's "Blueprint for Action" adopted in 1984. The plan has already helped schools successfully improve their curriculum, educational philosophy, facilities, community climate, student achievement and staff qualifications.

To assist school staffs which are making a determined, professional effort to upgrade education in their buildings, a financial incentive may be available through the Michigan Department of Education. This assistance will be used to help districts and schools create a three to five year School Improvement Plan. These funds, which would be approved by teacher-administrator planning councils, could be used to finance improvements.

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The Michigan Department of Education would also be available to assist school building staffs with their actual improvement process, the use of available resources, and the development of a local school improvement model.

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Student attendance and discipline

Michigan students must have a safe and positive learning environment. The time has come for the state to become a partner in helping guarantee such an environment in every Michigan classroom.

The state can set the stage for action by developing model attendance and discipline policies and codes for all school districts. The model discipline policies would clearly outline the behavior that will not be tolerated in Michigan schools and the punishments which should be considered when such behavior occurs.

School districts would be encouraged to use the model codes and policies, or choose another approach to local needs based on input from parents, teachers, counselors, student and others.

The state can also help those students who wish to graduate, but because of financial, social or emotional difficulties cannot thrive in a typical school setting. The state can provide categorical aid to establish alternative education programs which meet rigorous guidelines for these students. Such programs exist in Michigan districts, and in some cases they are experiencing better than a 50 percent graduation success rate.

Research indicates a significant amount of disruptive behavior is an attempt to "send a message" to the schools. If institutionally sanctioned feedback systems are created in schools, the amount of student violence, vandalism and disruptive behavior may decline. Such feedback must be an ongoing element of school programs, and the system must result in action being taken to resolve concerns expressed by students.

Since there is clear evidence that educational success is tied to the amount of time students spend in the classroom, a model school attendance policy should be developed. It may include provisions tying course credits with reasonable class expectations such as amount of homework and assignments completed, quizzes attempted, and class participation.

Staff development is also a key element of viable school attendance and discipline programs. The development must be fair and equitable, receive consistent administration, and have assistance available as needed. Intermediate school districts and the Department of Education may be vital links in the success of the staff development activities.

The plan could include a process to gather facts and provide financial assistance as need for particularly acute discipline and student attendance problems in Michigan.

Some school districts are faced with inordinate costs associated with school security. Such costs include security personnel, equipment, transportation and associated administrative needs. There should be state support for reimbursement to local districts for general fund expenditures used for safety and security that are above reasonable costs. This could be accomplished through grants administered through the Department of Education on a need basis.

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Student career plan

The career plans of every Michigan secondary school student can be linked with the work force needs of the state's business and industrial community through the development of a Student Career Plan (SCP).

A six-step process to help each student improve his or her chances for long-term employment, the SCP — also known as the Employability Development Plan — already has the approval of a number of public and private vocational organizations, and several Chambers of Commerce. It is also responsive to expressed student Leadership Forum concerns that were raised in 1983 over a lack of career information in secondary schools.

Student Career Plans are now being tried in some school districts and are required under the federal Job Training Partnership Act.

SCP would require each local district to provide six core areas of career instruction and information to all students and provide them with a completion document. The core areas are career awareness, basic academic skills, positive work habits, employability skills, life management skills and salable occupation skills.

The plan enables students to use their high school years to the fullest to gain employment skills and other needed job competencies. Information collected on the SCP can also be used on a resume after high school. The SCP signifies a student has a Career Plan, plus a high school diploma.

Each community SCP would be developed by a local planning committee of leaders from business and industry, teachers, counselors, curriculum personnel, administrators, placement specialists and students. Using available state and local data, and the direct input of the total committee, assurances that school courses would fill definite area employment needs would be very high.

To establish Student Career Plans, it is recommended that state school aid act incentive funds be administered and distributed by the Michigan Board of Education. Most of the funds would go to intermediate district personnel for the training of local district staffs, and technical assistance and support.

In summary, Student Career Plans give educators who are training the work force of tomorrow a chance to help their students make a direct contribution to the continued economic development of the state. It also helps students make informed career choices that meet the flexibility needed in local or regional labor markets.

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Student transportation funding improvements

A new system of financing student transportation should be considered to reduce state subsidy cost increases, which have been 50 percent higher than those experienced in general education for the past decade.

The proposed new system promises to cut down on current bureaucratic procedures for documenting costs of transportation. It will also provide more realistic financial support for sparsely populated districts in which most students must travel great distances to and from schools.

The new system, to be tested in about a dozen districts, involves giving budget managers a state aid incentive to lower their known transportation cost for eligible students below those of a regional or area average. The incentive is to provide state support for transportation based on the "average" amount spent on the service among neighboring school districts.

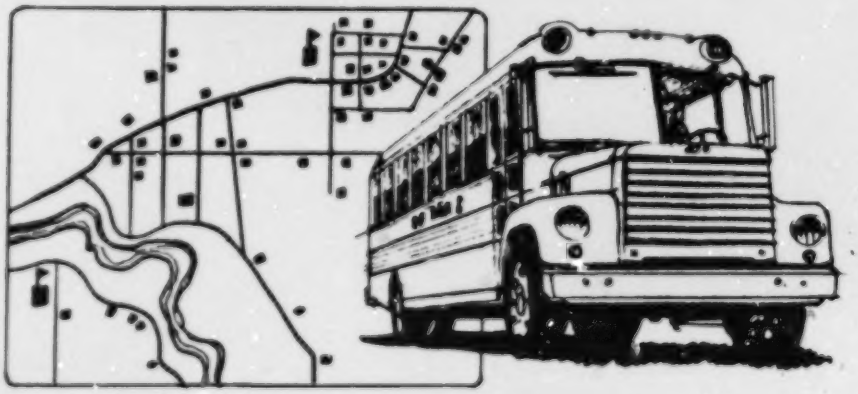
By allowing districts to keep all or most of the money saved through efficient use of staff and purchases, and/or bus capacity, remaining local costs of transportation could be offset significantly. The surplus funds could be devoted to other operating needs of a school district.

The transportation cost rise has been triggered somewhat by a student enrollment decline. Buses must travel greater distance to take students to fewer schools.

The new system of funding transportation would use a formula based upon reimbursements for uncontrollable costs such as population sparsity, miles traveled per pupil, percentage transported who are special education students, etc. The funding formula would be adjusted to new data each year.

Proponents of this plan believe it will also eliminate the current cumbersome and time-consuming system of bus inventory reports and route certification forms for every student in Michigan.

The development of the new system would also encourage the formation of efficient "consortiums" to provide transportation for gifted or vocational students between districts, and to deal with the great distances between schools in some areas of northern lower Michigan and the Upper Peninsula.



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University/school district improvement program

Michigan's finest higher education talent could supplement their university professorial workload by assisting school district teachers through the establishment of a School Improvement Hour (SIH) incentive concept.

Although university personnel regularly provide consulting, outreach and non-credit workshops to the public and private sectors, no financial mechanism exists to sponsor similar services to the classroom teacher.

A School Improvement Hour would make it possible for local school districts to select the professors whose experiences are best suited to their need. As payment for each 10 hours college or university personnel devote to enhancing the growth and development of the classroom teacher, the state could provide the university with funding equal to one graduate student hour of credit. A statewide formula is planned for reporting SIH credits.

The SIH concept has been approved by Michigan's deans of colleges of education, the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The need for professional staff deveiopment clearly exists in Michigan's elementary and secondary schools. Seventy percent of the persons responding to the latest national Gallup Poll on public attitudes toward education also support teacher and administrator retraining.

The use of the School Improvement Hour plan would increase the availability of higher education faculty for in-service work with teachers and redirect a portion of higher education efforts to strengthening K-12 educational programs in Michigan.

The SIH would also serve as an incentive for university faculty to keep professionally alert to developments in their fields. Finally, it would be responsive to those who hold the opinion that universities should devote more resources to retraining, now that new degrees are in lower demand.

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